



Alliance for Telecommunications
Industry Solutions

Sponsor of the



Ordering and Billing
Forum

A Forum of the Carrier Liaison Committee

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February 21, 2002

Ms. Dorothy Attwood
Chief, Common Carrier Bureau
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Email: dattwood@fcc.gov

RE: March 4, 2002 FCC Forum on Toll-Free Number Administration

Dear Ms. Attwood,

The ATIS-sponsored Ordering and Billing Forum ("OBF") SMS/800 Number Administration Committee ("SNAC") is responding to the Federal Communication Commission's ("Commission" or "FCC") invitation in Public Notice (DA 02-315) to submit materials regarding the FCC sponsored forum on toll-free number administration to be held on March 4, 2002. Although the SNAC will send a liaison to the forum, we also wish to formally submit our comments on several issues raised in the Public Notice on which there is unanimity among SNAC members.

As you may know, the SNAC is an industry forum which deals exclusively with issues related to toll-free service, including implementation of Resp Org-to-database processes and procedures; infrastructure development and systems support; and prioritization of software and hardware updates to accommodate business needs. SNAC meetings are open to all interested parties, and SNAC participants include representatives from every facet of the toll-free industry, including large and small IXCs; RBOCs and other LECs (including all of the SCP owner/operators); non-carrier Resp Orgs such as toll-free service bureaus; toll-free service subscribers; and DSMI, the SMS/800 administrator. Thus, where consensus has been reached, the SNAC is uniquely situated to provide recommendations which reflect the concerns and needs of the toll-free industry participants.

In order to ensure that toll-free service providers are able to meet the provisioning needs of their subscribers in a fair and efficient manner, the SNAC makes the following recommendations about toll-free number administration under the current system as well as under a proposed restructured system. We emphasize that the "Yes" or "No" responses were supported unanimously by the SNAC participants in attendance at the OBF #77, February 11-15, 2002 meeting. The supporting explanations were developed through the consensus process via conference call.

- *Should the Commission implement the directives proposed in the DSMI Letter? Because industry believes that the directives would be costly and potentially ineffective, what other solutions could be implemented either as an alternative to, or in addition to, the directives in the DSMI Letter to achieve the Commission's stated objectives?*

NO.

The directives contained in the DSMI letter will not resolve the concerns raised by the FCC and even worse, if implemented, will harm end user subscribers.

Whatever system changes are implemented (if any) must support the expeditious correction of accidental disconnects with as little harm as possible to all involved parties.

While it is never the intent of a toll-free service provider or toll-free customer to disconnect a toll-free number in error, the fact is that such errors do occur. If a Resp Org is unable to reactivate an erroneously disconnected number, both the disconnected customer and the acquiring new subscriber will be harmed; the former will lose calls intended for it, and the latter will waste resources handling calls not intended for it.

The SNAC does not believe that system changes should be the primary means of preventing illegal use of toll-free numbers. To the extent that abuses are occurring, the Commission should rely upon enforcement action to punish proven violators. Swift and stringent enforcement action will have the desired deterrent effect without unreasonably affecting the day-to-day operations of law-abiding service providers or hampering their ability to meet the needs of their subscribers.

- *Should the Commission modify its toll-free administration rules to allow for the transfer of toll-free numbers between subscribers in certain instances?*

YES, transfers of toll-free numbers between subscribers should be allowed.

Since the inception of toll-free service, subscribers have been able to make changes to the billing name and address (BNA) on their accounts in response to business or personal needs, without undue regulatory interference. (Customers exercise similar control over the BNA on their local, long distance, wireless, and other telecommunications services, and singling out toll-free service for different treatment would cause significant customer confusion and concern.) If a subscriber freely agrees to transfer its toll-free number to another consumer, and such transfer does not violate specifically proscribed activities, there would seem to be no reason to prohibit subscriber-to-subscriber transfers.

SNAC is seriously concerned that any attempt by the FCC to carve out specific situations in which subscriber-to-subscriber transfers are allowed will result in an incomplete, overly limited list that fails to capture many instances in which there is a legitimate need to effect such a transfer. SNAC does not oppose FCC efforts to list "suitable" cases where a transfer of service request is "in order," provided that such list is for purposes of example only and is not considered exhaustive. Should the Commission question the legitimacy of any subscriber-to-subscriber transfer, it is the responsibility of the Resp Orgs to provide appropriate documentation as requested by the Commission, as to whether such transfer violates any Commission rules.

- *What can/should the Commission do to alleviate or eliminate warehousing, hoarding and unauthorized disconnections of toll-free numbers?*

More aggressive enforcement action by the FCC will help to minimize unauthorized disconnects, as well as warehousing and hoarding should the Commission choose to enforce these.

The SNAC is aware of no instance in which evidence has been presented to show that warehousing and/or hoarding of toll-free numbers is occurring, or that such practices are contributing to the exhaustion of the resource. The SNAC believes that Commission enforcement activity is a more effective and appropriate course of action than is implementation of the type of systematic changes contemplated in the DDMI letter. If the infraction proves to be something other than an isolated incident, the Commission could also require the offending carrier to implement internal measures to prevent further abuses, and subject it to on-going monitoring and escalating penalties for continuing violations.

- *Should the toll-free administrator more closely track the activities of Resp Orgs and, if so, how? Should the toll-free administrator require Resp Orgs to include names and other subscriber information in the records stored in the SMS/800 Database?*

NO.

The SNAC supports an environment that is driven by the needs of the business and the supporting SMS/800 Help Desk Resp Org Change procedures are sufficient to remedy escalated issues. Resp Orgs should be allowed to operate as freely as possible without harming other Resp Orgs or their end user subscribers. The system administrator has the ability to monitor system use such as transaction-based activities and scripting, and has the ability to "turn down" an application with proper notice. The SNAC believes that more intrusive tracking by the toll-free administrator is unwarranted, because the administrator may misinterpret a Resp Org's system activities based on its lack of understanding of the business practices of individual Resp Orgs. If one Resp Org's activities negatively affect the activities of another Resp Org, resolution should be attempted through the Help Desk using existing escalation procedures.

The SNAC firmly believes that neither the Commission nor the toll-free administrator can or should require that Resp Orgs include subscriber information in the SMS/800. This is highly confidential, competitively sensitive data, and mandatory inclusion of such information in a public database (and the subsequent download of that information to SCPs) is totally unwarranted. Resp Orgs which choose to use the SMS/800 as their provisioning database should be allowed to continue to include their subscriber information in the SMS/800 on a voluntary basis.

- *To discourage hoarding, should the Commission limit the number of toll-free numbers serving each telephone line and require subscribers that want additional toll-free numbers to provide a justification for their request?*

NO.

Toll-free service providers should not be required to inflict upon their paying customers a demand that they justify requests for toll-free service numbers, nor should toll-free service providers be required to limit their service offers with artificial requirements such as a "per termination" rule. It is not customer friendly to require a customer to "prove" its need for a toll-free number before the toll-free service order can be placed.

- *Should the current self-serve method of allocating toll-free numbers be replaced by an allocation system similar to the North American Numbering Plan system, in which the number administrator allocates numbers upon carrier request, subject to certain conditions? Or would such an approach be too burdensome?*

NO.

The SNAC would like to bring to the Commission's attention that the individual number allocation frame work has been the cornerstone of the North American Toll-Free Industry and its phenomenal growth in bringing the benefits of the toll-free application for the promotion of commerce. The allocation of toll-free numbers on an automated, first-come-first-serve basis in real time using the best technology has made the toll-free number portability a real success in the US/Canada.

It is also important to note that the current number allocation frame work has provided opportunities for a variety of Resp Org entities, such as resellers, subscribers, and shared-use providers. This reaches beyond the traditional carrier model.

The SNAC does not support an allocation plan or any other measure that needlessly complicates and delays the number reservation process. The SNAC supports the current self serve toll-free number reservation/activation process because it is readily accessible and allows immediate order installation and downstream processing. Toll-free subscribers are accustomed to short installation intervals, and adoption of the above proposal will result in a deterioration of service quality.

The SNAC (which, as noted above, includes representatives from both the RBOCs and IXC's) was not able to come to consensus on restructure issues relating to the ownership and operation of the toll-free database, for many of the same reasons that the NANC toll free issue management group was unable to reach consensus. Therefore, the SNAC is forwarding two long-standing issues that require resolution (Issue 1566 SMS/800 System Utilization Constraints and Issue 1871 CPR/LAD Template Functionality).

Whatever measures are taken as a result of the forum and related activities, these issues and others like them dictate a supportive infrastructure.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martha Huizenga', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Martha Huizenga
OBF Moderator

cc: Mike Norris, OBF Assistant Moderator
Cynthia Benton, SNAC Co-Leader
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